

£££ FUNDRAISER OF THE MONTH!

# THE LUPUS RUNNER

When John Hibbs, 32, heard his sister had Lupus, he decided to get fit and get fundraising. In just over a year, he's raised, over £12,000, been to Downing Street and got a job as a fundraiser for Lupus UK! **INTERVIEW: FIONA BUGLER**

“In early 2008 my sister, Viki, 27, started to get ill. She was tired all the time, and had joint pain. Lupus affects so many parts of the body, and organs, and there are a range of symptoms, so it can be misdiagnosed. At first the GP said she had eczema, and was run down, but the longer it goes on the more damage can be done to the organs such as the heart and liver. Fortunately, she was diagnosed quite quickly with Lupus and started on treatment immediately.

“As a youngster I'd been a full-time footballer and had joined *Crewe FC* at the age of 13. But when I was 16 I'd started to get aches and pains, and at 21 I was forced to retire from football with arthritis.

## GO FOR IT

“When Viki was diagnosed I hadn't exercised for years, other than walking the dog, and the aches and pains and 'dodgy' knees didn't improve. But this was the incentive I needed, and the first step was organising a 5k in Birmingham.

“I used the gym and started swimming. I employed a personal trainer and worked hard on my core. At the 5k we had just 12 runners, but we were delighted to raise over £1,000. I'd got the fitness, and the fundraising bug!

“Then I decided to go for it and got a place to run London with *Lupus West Midlands*. On February 1st, 2009, another place became available with *Lupus UK*, so my wife Kate took it. We were careful in training because we'd been unfit. We took a strategy of run a mile and walk a minute – our longest run was only 15 miles.

## RACE DAY

“The day of the race, Kate and I were

awake at 230am (but didn't get up until 530am)... Right from the very start there were well wishers cheering us on. Shouting words of support, playing music, clapping and honking. Their spirit drove us on. *Team Hibbsy* (my grandparents, parents, and Viki), were on the course, and when we saw them cheering us on (five times over the 26.2 miles!) we knew we could do it. We settled into a steady pace and used the strategy that we had rehearsed time and again in training. And it paid off. We completed the run in 5:43, having loved every minute of it!

“But running the marathon, was only the start of the journey. In the run up to the race, I'd set up a website, a facebook, and twitter account (all new to me). For the marathon alone we'd raised £7,000. We had curry nights, car boot sales, and stalls in the shopping centre!

## TWEET TO THE TOP

“One of the highlights, was my trip to Downing Street. I decided to tweet Sarah Brown, to ask for help for *Lupus UK*. She was in the US at the time at the G8 summit with Gordon, but she sent me an instant direct reply and a contact at Downing Street.

“Two weeks later 80 people attended an evening reception at *Number 10*, with Sarah Brown as the host.

“The support we've had has been inspiring. Wendy Mallas is a portrait artist from Stockport who donates her paintings to charity for auction. Her brilliant picture of Paul Gascoigne was auctioned for £1,000. It was amazing meeting him. I was in total awe of a person who I grew up wanting to be. He is such a funny, caring guy, telling joke after joke.

“As well as football, I'm now passionate about fundraising. In April 2010, I joined

“We raised £1,000 and I'd got the fitness bug – and the fundraising bug”



*The West Midlands Lupus Group* taking the position of *Publicity & Fundraising Officer*, a part-time post that I combine with being a football scout for Liverpool, and working in IT support for an energy company!

“All the work is geared to my sister Viki and to raising awareness. We've already started fundraising for London next year, and the total is now over £12,000. And, as well as raising money, I'm getting fitter, and hope to crack five hours next year!

■ Find out more about John's fundraising at [www.lupusrunner.co.uk](http://www.lupusrunner.co.uk);

■ For Wendy Mallas's pictures, visit: [www.wendymallas.com](http://www.wendymallas.com);

■ For Lupus UK, visit, [www.lupusuk.org.uk](http://www.lupusuk.org.uk);

■ To sponsor John and Kate, visit [www.justgiving.com/LupusRunners](http://www.justgiving.com/LupusRunners).

## WHAT'S YOUR PERSONAL BEST?

Whether it was your first race, the day you ran your fastest time, or the run on which your partner proposed, we'd love to hear about your Personal Best running memory. Send the details along with photos to us at: [letters@runningfreemag.co.uk](mailto:letters@runningfreemag.co.uk) We just might ask you to feature on this page and share your story with the world. What's more, everyone who stars in Personal Best gets a fantastic pair of Brooks running shoes!

